How to Evaluate Your Telehealth Vendor for Clinical Content Quality

BRIGHT·MD

White Paper

Bright.md is a venture-backed, privately held company based in Portland, Oregon focused on positively transforming healthcare delivery for stakeholders on both sides of care, including leading health systems in North America.

Since its founding in 2014, Bright.md has stayed tightly focused on its mission to modernize healthcare; generate savings to the overall cost of care; provide high-quality, evidence-based, convenient care for patients; and automate tedious documentation for clinicians.

We've all experienced it— a vendor sells you software that promises to solve a huge problem for your organization. Instead, you realize that they skimped on quality, and you end up with a digital door stopper. All the technical wizardry in the world won't be worth anything if it ignores the trust that physicians and patients take as a given: clinical quality.

How can you ensure that you're choosing a product that not only checks all of the technical boxes, but also preserves your commitment to the best outcomes for your patients?

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Foundational requirements

Any vendor who includes clinical content as part of their offering should be able to check the following boxes. An inability to meet any of these requirements should send up red flags.

A list of references or source material

Patients expect their care to be evidence-based. Likewise, providers know that for patients to get the best outcomes, the care they deliver must be backed by the latest peer-reviewed studies and standard-of-care guidelines. Your vendor should be able to support the design and content decisions they've made within their application with a reference list or bibliography.

A way to measure and report on clinical outcomes

This is straightforward: You can't gauge a vendor's clinical quality without a way to measure the clinical outcomes impacted by that vendor's software. Great vendors will provide a self-directed, easy-to-use dashboard that you can access on demand.

Transparency

You shouldn't need to poke around every corner of the application to uncover all of the clinical content that exists within it. Your vendor should provide a full transcript of all the clinical content contained in the application. With this content in hand, you'll be able to independently evaluate whether the application meets your standards.

A clear, reproducible methodology for content creation, revision, and enhancement

Your vendor should be able to share how they create content. A good methodology document pulls back the curtains so that you can get an understanding of the thinking that's behind clinical content. At a minimum, their methodology should align with your own internal SOPs for creating and maintaining clinical content. Ideally, their methodology should inspire and guide any of your own internal processes.

Going above and beyond

The criteria above are the bare minimum. Vendors who take clinical quality seriously should also be able to demonstrate the following:

The art of medicine

We've talked about the importance of the science of medicine, in the form of reference lists, adherence to evidence-based practices, and a solid methodology. However, great vendors take the "art of medicine" into consideration in their product and content design. Just as clinicians tailor their diagnoses and treatment plans to individual patient needs, so should the vendor's application. Content should change dynamically based on contextual variables such as patient age, sex, symptoms, and history.

A focus on satisfaction

Great vendors have done the legwork of defining, testing, and consistently using voice and tone to drive increased satisfaction. For your patients, look for evidence of plain language throughout their application. Although this may just seem like polish, if the application alienates patients, or if patients can't comprehend their treatment plans because of the language your vendor uses, treatment adherence and outcomes will be impacted.

Your provider's experience using new applications should not be an afterthought. Too often, vendors provide solutions that require providers to alter the way they care for patients, often in ways that are detrimental to care (e.g., text-heavy screens, buried buttons, unnecessary "alerts"). Great vendors provide solutions that integrate with and improve on your current workflow.

A vision for the future

It should be a given that vendors present solid solutions to current problems. However, vendors should also be able to present a clear roadmap for how they intend to address upcoming challenges. They should be able to articulate where they see themselves in 5 years, in 10 years, and how they view your shared landscape in those time horizons.

A vendor who hasn't thought deeply about what the future might look like will likely be playing catch-up when new tools arrive to advance and improve on clinical outcomes.

A great vendor should have those solutions on their roadmap, and save you the cost of switching to a new solution later on.

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